PASTOR'S AI QUICK START

A GUIDE TO AUGMENTED NTELLIGENCE IN MINISTRY

JEREMY W SCOTT

www.foundery.dev

Pastor's AI Quick Start

A Guide to Augmented Intelligence in Ministry

By Rev. Jeremy W. Scott

Contents

Introduction: The Monday Morning Problem

If you've been in ministry for more than a few years, you know exactly what I'm talking about when I say "the blank page problem." It's Monday morning, the adrenaline of Sunday has worn off, the coffee is barely kicking in, and you're staring at a blinking cursor. After 15 years of ministry, I still felt that weight every week. You want to be creative, but the administrative load is crushing, and sometimes the creative well just feels dry.

But here is the game-changer: You don't have to start at zero anymore.

I've started thinking of AI not as "Artificial Intelligence," but as **Augmented Intelligence**. It isn't here to replace your call, your anointing, or your heart. It's here to be your Creative Co-Pilot. Especially for those in smaller churches with little to no staff to bounce ideas off of, this tool is like having a brilliant, tireless intern sitting across the desk from you. It helps me iterate through ideas fast until I hit that spark—that "Aha!" moment—that actually gets me excited for Sunday.

This Playbook is your manual for that co-pilot. It covers the theology, the safety, and the exact "copy-and-paste" prompts I use to save time and deepen my ministry.

Part 1: The Ground Rules

What Are We Even Using?

We are using **Large Language Models (LLMs)** like Gemini or ChatGPT. But here is the biggest mental shift you need to make: **This is not a Search Engine.**

- **Search (Google) is a Library Card Catalog:** You ask for a topic, and it points you to a list of resources. You have to go read them and synthesize the answer yourself. Each search is brand new; it doesn't really care what you searched for five minutes ago.
- **AI is a Research Assistant:** You don't just ask for a link; you ask for the *answer*. And more importantly, **it remembers what you just said.**
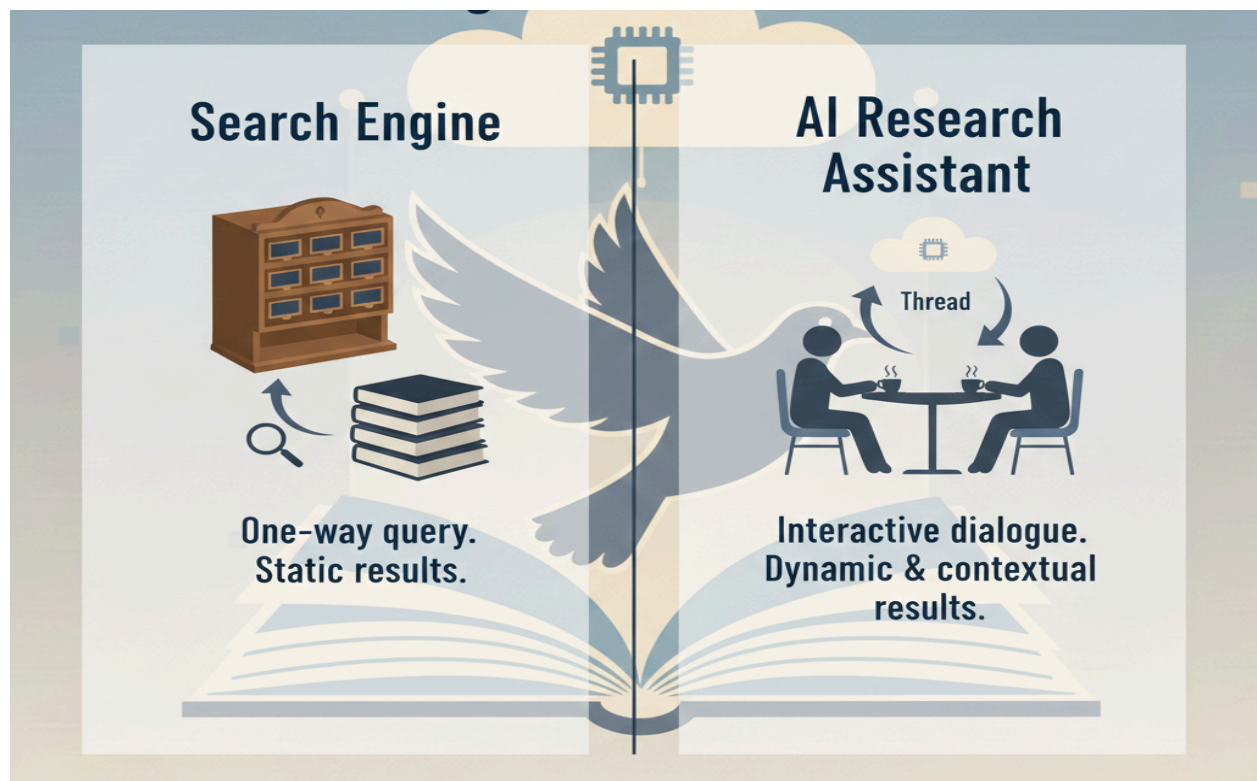
The Magic of the "Thread" When you start a chat, you are opening a "Thread." Think of this like a text message chain with a friend.

- If you search on Google for "Sermon on Grace" and then search "Make it shorter," Google will show you links about short people.
- If you ask AI for a "Sermon on Grace" and then type **"Make it shorter,"** the AI knows exactly what "it" is. It remembers the sermon it just wrote and edits it for you.

This means you can iterate. You don't have to get the prompt perfect on the first try. You can say:

- *"Good, but make it less academic."*
- *"Add a metaphor about gardening."*
- *"Critique that point I made in the second paragraph."*

The Bottom Line: Don't treat it like a vending machine (one request, one output). Treat it like a conversation over coffee. The more you go back and forth, the smarter it gets.

The Theological Anchor

We aren't "cheating" by using tools. In **Exodus 31**, God didn't just give Bezalel a vision for the Tabernacle; God filled him with "skill, ability, and knowledge" in all kinds of crafts. This is just a modern craft.

> **Wesleyan Fun Fact:** John Wesley was an early adopter! He was obsessed with electricity, calling it "the most considerable help" God had given the world for healing. He wrote *Primitive Physick* to democratize medicine for "plain people." We are using AI in that same spirit: as a "Prudential Mean"—a wise tool to help us steward our time.

The Three Golden Rules

Before you type a single word, memorize these three rules.

1. **The Bible-First Rule:** AI hallucinates (it makes things up). Never ask it, "What does the Bible say about X?" Instead, paste the scripture text *into* the chat. Tether it to the Word.
2. **The Anonymity Rule:** Never, ever paste real names or private prayer concerns into the chat. If Mrs. Johnson is in the hospital, to the AI she is "a beloved church member."
3. **The Soul Check:** You are the Lead Pastor; the AI is the intern. If the output feels generic or lacks the "breath" of the Spirit, do not use it.

Part 2: Building Your "Persona" (Start Here)

If you've never used these tools, don't worry. It is actually easier than checking your email. There is no software to download and no credit card required to get started.

Here is exactly how to get to the chat window where the magic happens.

Option A: Google Gemini (My Recommendation)

Best for: People who already use Gmail, Google Docs, or Drive.

1. **Open your browser** (Chrome, Safari, Edge, etc.).
2. **Type in:** gemini.google.com
3. **Sign In:** If you aren't already signed into your Google account, it will ask you to sign in (just use your normal Gmail address and password).
4. **The Interface:**
   - **The Chat Box:** At the very bottom of the screen, you will see a text bar that says *"Enter a prompt here"* or *"Ask Gemini"*. This is where you talk.
   - **The History:** On the left side, you'll see a menu. Every time you start a new topic, it saves here so you can come back later (just like an email inbox).

Option B: ChatGPT (The Alternative)

Best for: People who want to try the tool that started the craze.

1. **Open your browser.**
2. **Type in:** chatgpt.com
3. **Sign Up:** Click "Sign Up." You can use an email address, or just click "Continue with Google/Microsoft/Apple" to use an existing login.
4. **The Interface:**
   - **The Chat Box:** Just like Gemini, look for the bar at the bottom that says *"Message ChatGPT"*.
   - **New Chat:** In the top left corner, there is usually a small icon (often a pencil or a plus sign) to start a fresh conversation.

Pro-Tip: The "New Chat" Habit

Think of each chat window like a separate meeting room.

- If you are planning **Lent**, keep it all in one chat window (so it remembers context).
- If you are writing an **email to the Trustees** about the roof leak, click **"New Chat"** to start fresh. You don't want the AI to confuse the

theology of the Cross with the theology of asphalt shingles!

Who are you?

The biggest mistake most people make is treating AI like Google. If you ask a generic question ("Write a prayer"), you get a generic answer. To get great results, you have to teach the AI who *you* are. We call this your **Persona**.

Step 1: The Discovery Prompt

Open a brand new chat. Copy and paste this prompt to let the AI interview you.

> **Copy & Paste:** "I am a United Methodist Pastor preparing to plan a worship series. I want you to help me build a 'Persona Statement' so your future outputs match my voice. Please ask me 5-7 questions about my theology, my favorite authors, the demographic of my congregation, and my preaching style. Once I answer, synthesize that into a 200-word 'Professional Pastor Persona' that I can save and use later."

Step 2: Save Your Golden Paragraph

Once it writes that paragraph for you, save it! You will use this at the start of every new chat session. It ensures the AI knows your theological "accent."

Part 3: The P.R.T. Framework
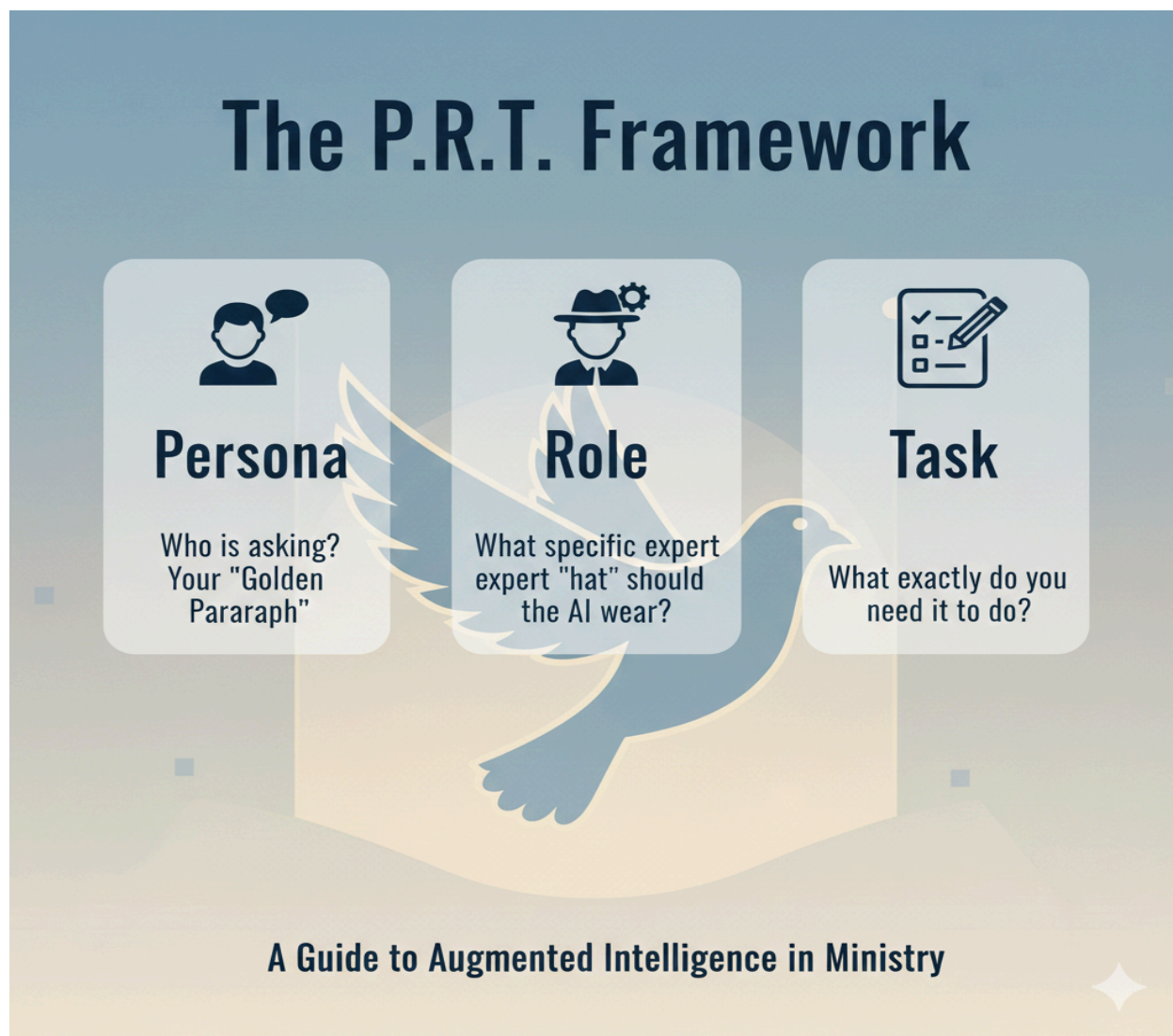
If you've ever tried AI and thought, *"Wow, this sounds generic and robotic,"* it's usually not because the AI is dumb. It's because you gave it a **"Low-Resolution"** prompt. Think of the AI like a Hollywood actor. If you hand them a script that just says "Act sad," you'll get a cheesy soap opera performance. But if you say, *"Act like a father who just dropped his youngest child off at college and is trying not to cry in the car,"* you get an Oscar-winning performance.

To get "High-Resolution" results for ministry, we use the **P.R.T. Framework**. This simple formula forces you to give the AI the context it needs to stop sounding like a robot and start sounding like a partner.

- **P - Persona:** Who is asking? (Your "Golden Paragraph" from Part 2).
- **R - Role:** What specific expert "hat" should the AI wear?

- **T - Task:** What exactly do you need it to do?

The Library of High-Resolution Roles

Don't just say "Act as a pastor." Use these specific roles to unlock different capabilities in the AI.

The High-Res Biblical Scholar

"Act as a Professor of New Testament Studies at a Methodist seminary. You prioritize the historical-critical method and the nuances of the original Greek/Hebrew over popular modern interpretations. Your tone is academic yet accessible to laypeople."

The High-Res Developmental Editor

"Act as a professional homiletics coach. Your goal is to help me find a clear 'Big Idea' in my messy notes. You are direct about 'logical leaps' that might confuse a listener and have a sharp eye for removing 'churchy' clichés."

The High-Res Creative Director

"Act as an innovative Worship Creative Director. You specialize in taking abstract concepts (like Sanctification) and finding tangible, modern-day metaphors or sensory objects that make the concept 'click' for a 21st-century audience."

The High-Res Skeptical Parishioner

"Act as a 'Seeker' in the pews. You are spiritually hungry but highly skeptical of religious 'insider' language. Tell me honestly where my writing sounds like 'church-speak' and where it actually invites you into a story."

Part 4: The Worship & Sermon Lab

Where to go when the well is dry.

This section isn't about letting the AI write your sermon (that's your job!). It's about using the AI to break you out of your creative ruts. We all have "go-to" moves—themes we always preach, metaphors we always use, and liturgy that sounds the same every week.

Use these prompts to shake things up. They are designed to be "season-agnostic," meaning they work just as well for Ordinary Time in July as they do for Advent in December.

The "Theological Contrarian" (Sermon Brainstorming)

Best for: When you feel like you've preached this text a thousand times and can't find a fresh angle.

> **Copy & Paste this Prompt:** "Using the **Role** of the **High-Res Biblical Scholar**, I am working on a sermon about [Insert Scripture Text or Topic]. Your **Task** is to provide three 'unexpected angles' on this text. Move beyond the standard Sunday School interpretation.
>
> - **Angle 1:** A Wesleyan 'Social Holiness' perspective.
> - **Angle 2:** A deep dive into a specific Greek/Hebrew word that changes the meaning.
> - **Angle 3:** A perspective from a marginalized voice or a different cultural context.
>   **Show your work:** Cite a theologian or historical context that supports each angle."

The "Liturgy Creator" (Fresh Words for Worship)

Best for: Creating Calls to Worship, Prayers of Confession, or Benedictions that match your specific sermon theme.

> **Copy & Paste this Prompt:** "Using the **Role** of the **High-Res Creative Director**, your **Task** is to write three distinct options for a [Call to Worship / Prayer of Confession / Benediction] based on [Insert Scripture].
>
> - **Option 1 (Traditional):** Formal, high-church language, using 'Thee' and 'Thou' if appropriate for a classic feel.
> - **Option 2 (Modern/Gritty):** Conversational, honest, and grounded in the struggles of everyday life.
> - **Option 3 (Poetic/Contemplative):** Use sensory imagery (light, water, wind) and silence.

> **Constraint:** Ensure all options use inclusive language for God and people."

The "Children's Moment" Generator

Best for: When you need an object lesson that doesn't feel like a bribe with candy.

> **Copy & Paste this Prompt:** "Act as a **High-Res Creative Director** with experience in elementary education. I need a 3-minute Children's Moment for this Sunday based on [Insert Scripture].
>
> - **The Object:** Pick a common household item (like a flashlight, a sponge, or a mirror) that I can easily bring from home.
> - **The Lesson:** Explain the theological concept of [Insert Concept, e.g., Forgiveness] using that object.
> - **The Constraint:** Do not be moralistic ('Be a good boy/girl'). Instead, focus on God's love and action.
> - **Interaction:** Give me one question to ask the kids that will actually get them talking."

The "Illustration Finder"

Best for: When you have a great point but no story to make it stick.

> **Copy & Paste this Prompt:** "Act as a **High-Res Storyteller**. I am preaching on the concept of [Insert Theme, e.g., Waiting on God]. I need a powerful illustration to help this land.
>
> - **Idea 1:** A historical event or figure that embodies this struggle.
> - **Idea 2:** A scientific phenomenon (in nature, space, or biology) that serves as a perfect metaphor.
> - **Idea 3:** A 'slice of life' story about a modern parenting or work situation.
>   **Note:** Do not invent fake stories. If you suggest a historical event, ensure it is factual."

Part 5: The "Monday Morning Multiplier"

This is my favorite part. Your sermon shouldn't die at noon on Sunday. We are going to turn that 20-minute message into a week's worth of discipleship content.

Step 1: Get the Transcript

- **YouTube:** Go to your video → Click "More" (...) → Show Transcript. Copy the text.
- **Zoom:** Go to Cloud Recordings → Download the "Audio Transcript" file.

Step 2: Clean the Transcript

Copy & Paste:

"Role: Act as a High-Resolution Developmental Editor and homiletics coach. Your goal is to take a raw, extemporaneous speech transcript and transform it into a clean, professional, and highly readable document while strictly preserving my unique theological voice and the heart of the message.

Task: I am pasting a raw transcript of a sermon. Please perform the following:

Remove filler words (um, uh, you know, like), verbal stammers, and subject-verb disagreements common in extemporaneous speaking. Correct capitalization and punctuation throughout.

Format with Subheadings: Break the text into logical paragraphs. Every 250-400 words, insert a bold subheading that captures the core theme of the following section to make the text skimmable and organized.

Preserve Original Content: Do not summarize or remove stories, illustrations, or key points. Keep the original length and detail intact.

Sermon Transcript to Process: [PASTE HERE]"

Step 3: Repurpose the Content

Once you have the clean text, run these prompts:

The Daily Devotional Generator

"Using that cleaned sermon transcript, act as a **High-Res Devotional Writer**. Create 5 short daily devotionals (approx. 150 words each) for the upcoming week. Each day must include a relevant scripture verse, a brief reflection that builds on a specific point from my sermon, and a closing prayer. Maintain a tone that is encouraging, reflective, and pastoral."

The Small Group Guide

"Act as a **High-Res Discipleship Director**. Create a 'Table Talk' guide for families. Provide 3 open-ended discussion questions that move beyond simple facts and challenge participants to apply the sermon's 'Big Idea' to their daily lives."

The Newsletter Summary

"Act as a **High-Res Developmental Editor**. Draft a 150-word 'Pastor's Pen' summary of this sermon for our email newsletter. Capture the emotional heart of the message for those who couldn't attend. Also, give me 3 curiosity-inducing subject lines for the email."

Part 6: The Digital Front Door (Church Comms)

We often write announcements for "insiders." Use AI to translate your church business for the community.

The Outreach Rewrite

"Act as a **High-Res Skeptical Parishioner**. I am pasting a church announcement below. Rewrite this as a Facebook post intended for someone who has not been to church in years. Focus on the 'Why'—why would a neighbor find value in this? Remove all jargon like 'narthex' or 'fellowship.' Make it sound like an invitation from a friend."

The Visual Metaphor

"Act as a **High-Res Creative Director**. Based on my sermon theme, describe a visual image I can use for social media. Avoid cheesy religious clipart. Describe a high-quality, cinematic photograph or minimalist graphic that captures the *feeling* of the message. I will use your description to search for stock photos."

Here are three robust additions for **Part 6** that address common pain points: recruiting volunteers without guilt, getting people to actually open the newsletter, and writing social media captions that stop the scroll.

The "Guilt-Free" Volunteer Pitch
Best for: When you need Sunday School teachers or greeters, and you're tired of begging.

"Act as a **High-Res Volunteer Coordinator** who specializes in 'Gift-Based Ministry.' I need to recruit volunteers for [Insert Role, e.g., Nursery Worker].

- **The Bad Way:** Do not write a 'help wanted' ad that focuses on our desperate need or uses guilt.
- **The Good Way:** Write a script for a pulpit announcement that focuses on the *impact* the volunteer will make. Highlight the joy of the work and how it shapes the next generation/community.
- **Tone:** Inspiring, invitational, and low-pressure."

The "Inbox Winner" (Newsletter Subject Lines)
Best for: When you spend hours writing the weekly email, but nobody opens it because the subject line is just "Church Update."

"Act as a **Digital Marketing Expert** who specializes in email open rates. I am pasting the text of my weekly church newsletter below. **Task:** Read the content and generate 5 distinct subject line options that will make people want to click.

- **Option 1:** Short and punchy (under 6 words).

- **Option 2:** A curiosity gap (make them wonder what's inside).
- **Option 3:** A warm, personal question.
- **Constraint:** Avoid generic titles like 'Weekly Update' or 'Pastor's Note.' **Newsletter Text:** [PASTE HERE]"

The "Scroll Stopper" (Social Media Captions)
Best for: Posting your sermon online. Don't just post the link; start a conversation.

"Act as a **Social Media Community Manager**. I am posting the link to my sermon on [Insert Topic]. **The Problem:** If I just write 'Watch my sermon here,' nobody will engage. **The Solution:** Write a caption that hooks the reader with a relatable struggle or a provocative question related to the topic. The goal is to get them to comment with their own thoughts, even if they don't watch the video. **Constraint:** Keep it under 280 characters. Include 3 relevant hashtags."

Troubleshooting: What to Say When It Act Weird

1. The "Pivot" Menu (One-Liners to Fix Bad Writing)

If the output isn't right, don't start over! Just tell it how to fix it.

- **If it's too cheesy:** *"This sounds like a greeting card. Rewrite it to be gritty, honest, and grounded in real life. Remove all clichés."*
- **If it's too long:** *"Cut the word count by 50%. Be punchy."*
- **If it's too boring:** "You lost the energy. Rewrite the second paragraph using a metaphor about [fire/water/construction/etc]."
- **If it's too complicated:** *"This sounds like a seminary paper. Rewrite it so a 5th grader would understand the core concept."*
- **If it's too confident:** *"You are sounding arrogant. Soften the tone. Use phrases like 'Perhaps' or 'Maybe we can consider...'"*

2. Fixing "Context Drift" (The Amnesia Problem)

In a long chat (like planning a 6-week series), the AI sometimes "forgets" your Persona or the specific rules you set at the beginning. It gradually drifts back to being a generic robot.

- **The Symptom:** It stops sounding like a Wesleyan scholar and starts sounding like a generic internet article.
- **The Fix:** You don't need to start a new chat. Just type this:

  "PAUSE. Read back through our conversation history. Remind yourself of my Persona and the High-Res Role we established. Re-orient yourself to those parameters before answering the next question."

3. The "Hallucination" Check (The Liar Problem)

We mentioned this in the Golden Rules, but it bears repeating: **AI wants to please you more than it wants to be right.** If you ask for a quote, it might invent one just to make you happy.

- **The Symptom:** *"As C.S. Lewis once said, 'The internet is a vast ocean...'"* (He definitely didn't say that).
- **The Fix:** If a quote or fact looks *too perfect*, verify it.
- **The Prompt:** *"Are you 100% sure that is a real quote? Please provide the source book and page number. If you cannot verify it, please find a different quote that you can verify."*

4. The "Preachy" Problem

AI often defaults to a "Moral of the Story" structure where every output ends with, *"So remember to always be nice!"* It feels condescending.

- **The Fix:** Tell it to stop moralizing.

  "Stop trying to wrap everything up with a tidy bow. Leave the tension unresolved. End with a question, not a statement."

Final Thought: The Permission Slip

I want to leave you with one final, liberating thought: **Efficiency is not the goal of ministry; faithfulness is.**

The point of using AI isn't to turn you into a content machine that churns out three times as many sermons. The point is to save you from the **drudgery** so you can spend more time on the **mystery**.

You have permission to be inefficient. If you absolutely love sitting in a coffee shop with a fountain pen, hand-crafting your Call to Worship because it feeds your soul—**do not give that to the AI.** That is holy ground. Keep it.

But if writing the weekly newsletter blurb feels like pulling teeth? If staring at a blank screen for a Children's Moment makes you want to quit? **Give that to the bot.**

We get into trouble when we get "stuck"—when the administrative weight of the church drains the joy out of the calling. AI is the best tool I've found for unstucking myself. It handles the "business" of the church so I can get back to the "body" of the church.

Use this Playbook to clear the deck. Automate the boring stuff. Speed run the brainstorming. But keep the sacred work of connecting with God and your people slow, inefficient, and beautifully human.

You are the Architect. Let the AI be the Builder. Now, go be a Pastor.